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The Terrorist International

Neither Black September nor any other terrorist group has ever put together a unified, centralized international command along the lines of the infamous SMERSH of James Bond lore. No single country or guerrilla organization directs terrorist activities around the globe. Yet, even before last week's slaughter in Munich, there was evidence of growing complicity among some of the most hardcore revolutionaries in Europe, the Middle East, Japan and Latin America. Experts of U.S. intelligence report a consistent pattern of informal contacts between revolutionary groups in various countries, mainly for such purposes as financing, acquiring weapons and guerrilla training. In addition, such reciprocal privileges as the supplying of forged documents and shelter and travel arrangements abroad have given terrorists a new international mobility enabling them to seek out targets anywhere in the world.

First among the terrorist groups to spot the potentials in international cooperation were the fedayeen commandos. Specifically, it was the Marxist-oriented Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) of Dr. George Habash that spearheaded the search for allies abroad, and Habash himself has emerged as a guru of world revolution. Two years ago, he delivered the key address at a symposium on revolutionary strategy, organized in Pyongyang by North Korea's Workers' (Communist) Party. "In the age of the revolution of peoples oppressed by the world imperialist system," Habash told 400 wildly applauding delegates, "there can be no political or geographical boundaries or moral limits to the operations of the people's camp." And he argued in a concluding flourish that "in today's world, no one is 'innocent,' no one is a 'neutral'."

During the heyday of the fedayeen movement in early 1970, the Palestinian armed camps in Jordan and Lebanon acted as magnets for international revolutionary acolytes from the U.S., Scandi-

navia, Western Europe and Japan. In summer-training sessions, the would-be terrorists (including, it is believed, representatives from the U.S. Weathermen faction and the Irish Republican Army) learned such useful guerrilla skills as running through burning rubber tires or the care and handling of nitroglycerin.

"There must have been hundreds of foreigners who learned how to handle explosives during that period," a Western intelligence source in Beirut admits. "Many probably did it for kicks or as a lark and then went home and forgot about it. Others did not." Among the latter were the members of Turkey's Dev-Gene group, trained in fedayeen camps and then infiltrated back to the homeland. When Israeli Consul General Ephraim el-Ron was assassinated in Turkey last year, captured Dev-Gene members told authorities that the killing was done "in part payment of our debt to the Palestinian freedom fighters."

Love At First Sight

Evidence of similar linkages between terrorists of different nationalities abound. Two years ago, when a skyjack team that included Palestinian girl-commando Leila Khaled made an abortive attempt to take over an El Al airliner in flight to London, Israeli security men on board killed Khaled's male companion; he turned out to be Patrick Arguello, a member of the Nicaraguan Tandanista guerrilla movement. And most of the members of the notorious Baader-Meinhof gang that kept West Germany on edge for nearly two years were said to have been alumni of Palestinian guerrilla camps. But easily the most striking link-up to date was the one forged between the PFLP in the Middle East and Japan's Rengo Sekigun, or United Red Army Group. They met while the PFLP's Habash was in North Korea, and it was apparently a revolutionary version of love at first sight, consummated on the spot with an agreement pledging coordinated PFLP-Red Army activities

whenever possible. Ultimately, the alliance brought on the world's first fully provable terrorist conspiracy involving direct cooperation of different national guerrilla groups.

That was the Lydda Airport massacre at Tel Aviv last May, in which the "internationalized" nature of today's terrorist activities was unmistakably revealed. First, a quartet of young Japanese radicals was dispatched to Lebanon (via the U.S., Canada and France) for training in fedayeen camps. On completing their course, the terrorists left Beirut for Paris, Rome and Frankfurt, where PFLP agents provided them with false passports. Three of the young Japanese terrorists then returned to Rome to pick up hand grenades and Czech-made VZT-58 automatic rifles supplied by Italian sympathizers. Near the end of May, the trio departed for their mission of indiscriminate murder in Tel Aviv—a bloody kamikaze assault that killed 28 and wounded scores more. The sole survivor among the three Red Army terrorists, Kozo Okamoto, was convicted by an Israeli military court and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The expansion of guerrilla operations

over wider distances hardly comes as any surprise to intelligence agents, who point out that terrorists are merely taking advantage of the mobility of a modern world that is available to everyone else. "International terrorists cannot help but meet and exchange ideas given the easy communications in the world today," observes Col. Antoine Dahdah of Lebanon's security service. And the mass gadding-about of travelers increases the difficulties of separating the terrorists from visiting businessmen, tourists and students. "Millions of people arrive at Orly Airport every year," laments a French counterintelligence agent. "How can we check each one? When a jumbo jet disgorges 350 passengers, how much time can the police devote to each passport without choking the airport?"

Furthermore, any half-competent terrorist agent can be expected to know where to go and whom to see before

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taking an assignment abroad. While in Western Europe, for example, he knows that West Germany's decentralized police system, in which each state within the federal republic maintains its own interior ministries, allows a bit more leeway than the highly centralized police establishments of France or Italy. Several European monasteries are considered safe havens, notably one at Cuxa near the border between France and Spain. Cities favored by the terrorists include Brussels, Zurich, Milan and Stockholm, mostly because of the liberal environment. Surprisingly enough, London is regarded kindly as an informal convention center by many underground extremist groups. Traditionally, the British police will not bother them if they have no local police record and they keep their noses clean for the duration of their stay. "It really is a little funny," says a Scotland Yard Special Branch officer. "They sit there eating jelly cakes and brown-bread-and-butter sandwiches blithely discussing availabilities of weapons and supplies of explosives."

In some instances, foreign embassies serve as the main conduits for underground activities through their diplomats and pseudo-diplomats. The current head of Black September's organization in Western Europe, reports NEWSWEEK Senior Editor Arnaud de Borchgrave, is Daoud Barakat, who is now installed big as life in Switzerland as a diplomat from Democratic Yemen fully accredited to the offices of the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva. Barakat has helped to plan some of Black September's most spectacular capers and is a prime suspect as a mastermind behind the Munich massacre. Yet, armed with a diplomatic passport issued by the Democratic Yemen Government in Aden, he can commute between Geneva and the Middle East with casual ease.

All the clandestine razzle-dazzle on the international stage has not masked the fact that terrorist groups in many parts of the world have not fared too well on their own home grounds. Japanese authorities no longer seem much concerned about the remnants of the United Red Army, and the Uruguayan Government appears to have broken the strength of its Tupamaro urban guerrillas. West Germany's Bonnie-and-Clyde pair of Ulrike Meinhof and Andreas Baader were both captured by police this summer. Even with their headline-grabbing outrages, the terror activities of the Palestinian fedayeen have backfired as often—perhaps more often—than they have succeeded. Black September's attempt to hold a hijacked Belgian airliner for ransom at Tel Aviv last May, for example, ended with Israeli commandos storming the aircraft, killing two terrorists and capturing two others. Indeed, it was the PFLP's feat of first diverting and then blowing up three hijacked airliners at Jordan's Dawson Field two years ago

that finally provoked King Hussein's army to launch an all-out offensive to oust the fedayeen from their Jordanian bases.

With disastrous results like those, it would be easy and comforting to conclude that terrorism is mostly counter-productive even for those who practice it. But such may not be the case. For the avant-garde in international terrorist organizations no longer cares much whether others approve of its tactics. Its models are less likely to be Mao Tse-tung, with his emphasis on national guerrilla movements, than the figure of Leon Trotsky—the Russian revolutionary who sought to spread Communism throughout the world. "His gigantic portrait, complete with fuzzy hair and pince-nez," wrote British New Left specialist Peter Paterson, "can dominate a hall full of British teen-agers on a sunny Sunday afternoon like some political version of that sanctified teen-age star, the late James Dean." Trotskyites see themselves as the catalysts provoking governments into ever harsher repressive measures. This, they believe, will encourage Fascism and, in turn, produce more radical fanatics and more cracks in established society.

The Philosophy 'Is to Shoot'

According to some European specialists, the founding of the Trotskyite Fourth International in Brussels two years ago represented the most ambitious current effort to set terrorism firmly into a multinational frame. Its leading theoretician, Prof. Ernest Mandel of the University of Brussels, urges "active participation of our comrades in armed insurrections designed to destroy the established order, whether in Ireland or in Latin America." The Fourth International seems to have especially close ties with Latin American terrorists—and, in fact, was instrumental in convincing the Latin leftists to switch from rural to urban guerrilla warfare. Its philosophy dovetails nicely with that of Brazil's Carlos Marighella, who first expounded the principle that "the urban guerrilla's only reason for existence . . . is to shoot." Marighella himself was killed in a police ambush in 1969.

Whether international terrorists can live up to their own rhetoric remains to be seen. "There are young revolutionaries in more than a dozen countries I can name who would be willing to take part in some dramatic, world-shaking act of bravado," said one U.S. intelligence analyst. "But basically all these movements are nationalistic in nature, with only a thin overlay of ideology, and there is seldom sustained, profitable contact between different groups." Lebanon's Colonel Dahdahm agrees: "What we have now are contacts which occasionally lead to exchanges of ideas and general cooperation on a particular action," he said. "This is not a real threat to security, but it is definitely a new problem that will make terrorism much